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THURSDAY, JANUARY 21, 1999

Arsenic fou

Health officials urge residents to test

BY ETHAN FORMAN
TRANSCRIPT STAFF

The annual fall testing of Boxford wells has turned up arsenic above state and federal maximum contaminant levels in four private drinking water wells.

During its annual water-testing program, the Boston Health found arsenic ranging from just exceeding maximum contaminant level for drinking water set by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to nearly 10 times the EPA standard.

"All of our water supply in Boxford is tapped into the natural bedrock system," said Board of Health member Mark Mitsch, a geotechnical engineer by trade. That's where arsenic occurs, naturally, he said. "It's hit or miss" whether residents find arsenic in their private wells, he said. And test results for arsenic can vary, he said.

The Board of Health found 'one neighbor with nothing and one neighbor with an exceedance (arsenic level) right next door... there's no pattern.'

Board of Health Vice Chair
Louise Kress

"It may be above (state guidelines) one day and below another day," Mitsch said of the arsenic levels.

Information provided by the Board of Health shows four homes, located on Spofford Road, Great Road, Baldpate Road and Appleton Road, exceeded EPA standard during the first round of tests. In a home wells were tested throughout town.

"It's the first time this issue has come up with a public water supply," Mitsch said. The town has notified the state Department of Environmental Protection about the elevated arsenic levels. But, the state does not regulate arsenic levels in private wells. Mitsch said the arsenic contamination

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EPA reports former Middleton glue factory posed a threat

BY ETHAN FORMAN
TRANSCRIPT STAFF

The roof leaks at a former glue factory on School Street in Middleton, and water pools on the cement floor, a report by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency pointed out. Chemicals in leaking drums could mix and explode spreading "hazardous vapors" through the area, the report warned. Trespassers could be exposed to contaminants.

Contamination could spread into Boston Brook if the Middleton Fire Department were to fight a fire at the site.

Those were some of the reasons why the state asked the federal government to cart away 500 drums of hazardous waste at the former glue factory on 40 School St.

What the EPA official, Gilberto Irizarry, found inside the building were 500 labeled and unlabeled 55-gallon drums "abandoned and inadequately staged," according to his Dec. 1 memo.

On Jan. 13, Gilberto Irizarry, the on-scene coordinator for the EPA, told the Board of Health the state Department of Environmental Pro-

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MELD employee dies on ski slope

BY ETHAN FORMAN
TRANSCRIPT STAFF

Paul G. Kilroy, 51, a 32-year-employee at the Middleton Electric Light Department and president of the Danvers Plaza Ski Club, apparently suffered a heart attack and died on an expert trail at a New Hampshire ski resort around noon Jan. 13.

"It's a shock," said Kilroy's boss, Mark Kelly, the manager of Middleton Electric Light Department about Kilroy's sudden death. Kelly said he got word of Kilroy's death on the slopes just a few hours after it happened, around 3:50 p.m. that day. "He leaves a big void in the electric department," Kelly said.

"Paul was probably the most fit person in the department, that is the most scary part of it," said Kelly, who had been contacting Kilroy's past business associates at the light department where he was the plant foreman. The light department and the

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Kelly said he was in Old Haswicker in 1971 while he was in the army. He was a non-commissioned officer. Kilroy said he was in an attack on the

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tection had asked the EPA to step into a potential Superfund site. Today, the EPA has approved \$790,000 for an emergency Superfund cleanup, expected to take three months. The amount is a conservative estimate, Irizarry said.

Irizarry's memo, called a "request for removal action," spells out the threat the abandoned glue factory's leftover materials posed.

Some drums had no lids, others were rusting, and some were leaking onto the concrete floor, the memo states.

The factory, in a wooded, residential area across the street from a wetland, is deteriorating. The windows are boarded up. A fence on the street is padlocked. The roof leaks, causing pools of water on the floor, according to the memo.

"Any hazardous substances mixed with the water on the floor could easily flow into the ground and contaminate the neighboring wetlands and Boston Brook. There is a threat of fire and/or explosion posed by the presences of unknown substances in deteriorating conditions in the building," Irizarry wrote.

If a fire broke out, "traditional fire fighting techniques" could spread the contamination. One-third of the 3.2-acre site is made up of wetlands which border Boston Brook to the northwest, Irizarry's Dec. 1 report states.

While not a national priority Superfund site, the abandoned glue factory "posed a threat to the public and the environment," Irizarry said in an interview at the EPA's new office at the factory. The state and the DEP had been working on the site "for a while," Irizarry said. Superfund legislation provides money for immediate cleanups.

About 500 drums of materials once used in the operations of American Glue and Resin Company will be removed from the factory, Irizarry said.

The drums are on the factory floor. Only people with breathing apparatus and in hazard suits are allowed to enter the 10,000-square-foot manufacturing floor, Irizarry said.

When asked what is in the drums, EPA and DEP officials said an inventory of the drums had been listed by a private contractor hired by the owner of the property. The EPA will test each container for their contents,

Irizarry said.

Most likely, the drums contain glue products and solvents such as acetone and toluene, Irizarry said. "Everything is contained," he said, and "no gases have been emitted" outdoors. Irizarry and his contractors monitor the outside of the factory with portable sampling monitors.

Besides toluene and acetone, the drums hold MEK, phosphoric acid and flammable liquids, Irizarry's report states.

Last week, the owner of the site, listed in the assessor's records as Patricia Auterio of Stoneham, was at the site to collect some equipment, Irizarry said. Auterio could not be reached for comment because her phone number is not published.

Irizarry said the Auterios have cooperated with state and federal officials with the cleanup, which is ultimately paid for by federal taxes. Irizarry could not say who, ultimately, would be responsible for reimbursing the government, but said the EPA has procedures in place "for enforcement."

Site history

According to Irizarry's Dec. 1 memo, the main building was built in the 1940s and was operated by Tom Sawyer Beverage, Inc., which today is in a separate building next door, off the property. The property was later purchased by a realty trust, and the site was home to Glennon-American Inc., an adhesives manufacturer, from 1970 to 1978.

In 1978, a trustee of the American-Middlesex Realty Trust purchased the property, and American Glue Company continued its operations until the early 1990s.

In 1997, the property owner contracted Draghi Environmental Services to remove two, 3,000-gallon underground storage tanks. One tank contained a solution of 5 percent toluene mixed with water, and the other was an empty heating oil tank, Irizarry's memo states.

Both the owner and the DEP were unable to perform a site cleanup, Irizarry wrote.

Irizarry said last week he intends to distribute a press release from the EPA around School Street, Essex Street, Liberty Street, Averil Road and Vera Street, all streets in the vicinity of the factory.

Solv drums

Solvents toluene, acetone and the toxic substances contained in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's deal with at the former American Glue factory on School Street.

The information comes from past site by a contractor hired by the owner.

The EPA's on-scene coordinator said the substances were contained in drums, in his Dec. 1 memo, called removal action."

The following information about was found on the Internet from the Substances and Disease Registry, a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services publication.

Toluene

The most likely way people would be exposed to this petroleum byproduct, used in many products such as thinners, fingernail polish and adhesives, is through sniffing glue.

"Breathing high levels of toluene can cause headaches, confusion, dizziness, and memory loss," the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's fact sheet says. The chemical has been found in more than 100 national priority Superfund sites in the United States.

Other facts about the toxic substance from the agency's Website includes:

- One can smell toluene, a colorless, sweet smell, at 8 parts per million (ppm) or less.

- It does not stay in the environment for long. It is broken down by microorganisms. Small amounts of the chemical are found in the air.

- Toluene affects the brain. Low levels cause "tiredness, confusion, weakness, memory loss, nausea, and dizziness."

- High levels of exposure can cause dizziness, sleep, unconsciousness, and death. Repeated high level exposure can cause damage, problems seeing and hearing, and loss of muscle control. It can also cause babies to suffer neurologic problems if the substance is breathed by the mother.

- Studies show toluene does not cause cancer.
- The EPA drinking water level is 100 ppm.

The workplace limit in air is 50 ppm.

Acetone

One can breathe acetone in many products, such as chemicals, paint and cigarette smoke.

Acetone is found naturally in the air in about one-third of all Superfund sites. The Environmental Protection Agency says.

"Exposure to high amounts of acetone can irritate your eyes and respiratory system, cause dizziness," the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry says.

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Solvents are in the drums on School Street

Solvents toluene, acetone and MEK are among the toxic substances contained in 500 drums the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has to deal with at the former American Glue and Resin Factory on School Street.

The information comes from past inventories of the site by a contractor hired by the owner.

The EPA's on-scene coordinator, Gilberto Irizarry, said the substances were contained in the metal drums, in his Dec. 1 memo, called a "request for removal action."

The following information about the substances was found on the Internet from the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, an agency under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:

Toluene

The most likely way people would be exposed to this petroleum byproduct, used in making paints, paint thinners, fingernail polish and adhesives, would be to breathe it in the workplace, in automobile exhaust or through sniffing glue.

"Breathing high levels of toluene affects the brain and can cause headaches, confusion, dizziness, sleepiness, and memory loss," the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's fact sheet states. The chemical has been found in more than half of the national priority Superfund sites in the country, the sheet states.

Other facts about the toxic waste found on the agency's Website includes:

- One can smell toluene, a colorless liquid with a sweet smell, at 8 parts per million and taste it at 1 part per million.
- It does not stay in the environment and is "readily broken down by microorganisms in the soil." Small amounts of the chemical are found in cigarette smoke.
- Toluene affects the brain. Low-level exposure can cause "tiredness, confusion, weakness, drunken-type actions, memory loss, nausea, and a loss of appetite and hearing."
- High levels of exposure can cause light-headedness, dizziness, sleep, unconsciousness and even death. Repeated high level exposure can lead to brain damage, problems seeing and hearing, memory loss and loss of muscle control. It can affect the kidneys. Babies can suffer neurologic problems if high levels of the substance are breathed by their mothers.
- Studies show toluene does not cause cancer.
- The EPA drinking water level is 1 part per million. The workplace limit in air is 50 parts per million.

Acetone

One can breath acetone in nail polish, household chemicals, paint and cigarette smoke.

Acetone is found naturally in the environment and in about one-third of all Superfund sites identified by the Environmental Protection Agency.

"Exposure to high amounts of acetone can irritate your eyes and respiratory system, and make you dizzy," the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease

Registry fact sheet states.

Acetone is a colorless liquid with a distinct smell that easily evaporates and is flammable. It is used to make plastic, fibers, drugs and other substances. Acetone occurs in plants, trees, vehicle exhaust, tobacco smoke and landfills. It is a chemical produced by the body when fat is broken down.

Most of the acetone released during its manufacture or use goes into the air, where it is broken down by sunlight. It does not build up in animals. It can move into the ground water from spills and landfills.

Small amounts of acetone are broken down by the liver. Breathing moderate to high levels of acetone can cause nose, throat, lung and eye irritation. High-level exposure can cause headaches, light-headedness, confusion, increased pulse rate, nausea and vomiting. It can cause unconsciousness and possibly coma.

Long-term health effects from animal studies include kidney, liver and nerve damage, as well as increased birth defects. It is unknown whether people would suffer the same effects. Acetone has not been classified as a carcinogen by the EPA.

The maximum workplace air concentration is 1,000 parts of acetone per million parts of air during an 8-hour workday.

MEK or 2-Butanone

Exposure to 2-Butanone (MEK) occurs in the workplace and from using products such as glues, coatings, paints and cleaning agents, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's fact sheet states.

It has been found at slightly less than one-third of all Superfund sites. It is a manufactured chemical that is also found in the environment. 2-Butanone, also called methyl ethyl ketone (MEK), is a colorless liquid with a sharp, sweet odor. It is used in glues.

It can enter the air during its production, use and transport, and from hazardous waste sites. In the air, it rapidly breaks down, and breaks down in about two weeks in water. It does not deposit on the bottom of rivers and lakes.

People can be exposed to MEK from cigarette smoke and sniffing glues. People can also be exposed from drinking contaminated water from wells near manufacturing or hazardous waste sites.

MEK can irritate the nose, throat, skin and eyes. "No one has died from breathing 2-Butanone alone," states the fact sheet. In concert with other chemicals, it can cause greater damage.

Animals that drank water with low-levels of MEK suffered mild kidney damage over a two-week period. There are no long-term studies of breathing or drinking MEK, which the EPA deems does not cause cancer.

Information on toxic substances can be found on the Internet at the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's Website: <http://atsdr1.atsdr.cdc.gov:8080>. For more information, call the ATSDR Information Center at (800) 477-1544.

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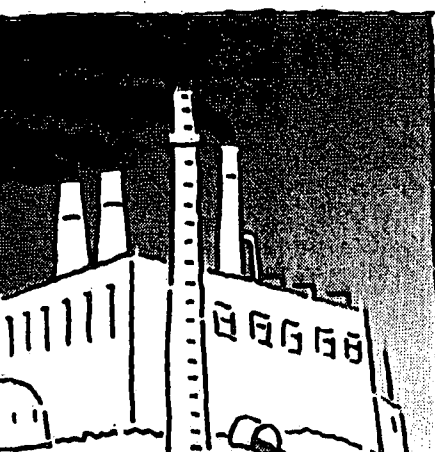
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